United Nations A/54/288/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 November 1999

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda items 118 and 123

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Joint Inspection Unit

Review of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its machinery

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit for the consideration of the General Assembly the comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its machinery (A/54/288), which are contained in the annex.

99-33905 (E) 221199

Annex

Comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its machinery

I. Introduction

1. The stated objective of the report by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) is to contribute to ongoing initiatives geared at enhancing the effectiveness and impact of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and its machinery and at reinforcing ACC's interaction with intergovernmental bodies in general and with those having a mandate for system-wide coordination in particular.

2. The report presents a brief historical background on the evolution of the Administrative Committee on Coordination since its creation by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 13 (III) of 21 September 1946. It highlights the changes that have occurred in the scope of the work of the Committee, from the initial emphasis on the implementation of the relationship agreements entered into by the United Nations with the specialized agencies to its current role of dealing with the whole range of substantive and management issues facing the United Nations system. It highlights the unique role of ACC as the only forum bringing together the executive heads of all organizations in the United Nations system in order to further intersecretariat cooperation and coordination.

3. The report outlines the reviews and reforms undertaken by ACC over the years and the lessons learned in the process. It goes on to assess the reforms ACC carried out in 1993, highlighting the guiding principles and new working methods for the functioning of ACC that emerged from that exercise. It notes that these led to the approval by the executive heads in 1998 of a new "operational plan" for ACC, which details requirements for a further qualitative strengthening of the effectiveness and impact of ACC.

4. The current functioning of ACC and of its subsidiary machinery is then reviewed, as are issues regarding secretariat support to the Committee and issues pertaining to its management of information. The report ends with a review of the interaction between ACC and intergovernmental bodies.

5. The report draws a number of conclusions and recommendations which highlight the need to continue the efforts under way to further mutually reinforcing interactions between ACC and the intergovernmental bodies, particularly the Economic and Social Council; strengthen a sense of "ownership" of ACC processes within the system; enhance the relevance and impact of the work of ACC; further streamline the working methods of its subsidiary machinery; facilitate the exchange of information among its members; and make information on the work of ACC available more systematically to the general public.

6. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit benefited from the views expressed by member organizations of ACC. In addition, an informal exchange of views that took place between members of the Organizational Committee (OC) of ACC and JIU Inspectors in March 1999 proved useful in clarifying a number of issues.

II. General comments

7. ACC members welcome the objectives of the report and its timeliness, in the context of the reforms under way within the United Nations system as well as the ongoing efforts within ACC itself for transformation and change, to enable ACC to meet effectively the new challenges ahead.

8. The past few years have brought about major qualitative improvements in ACC's functioning, in its contribution to greater coherence and unity of purpose within the system and in its interactions with intergovernmental bodies, particularly the Economic and Social Council. ACC appreciates that JIU has recognized the positive effect of these recent reforms.

9. The report gives a balanced assessment of the evolution of the Committee, and highlights the new culture of consultation and cooperation within which ACC is now operating. ACC members fully concur with the view of the Secretary-General in his statement to the Economic and Social Council dated 6 February 1998, in which he characterized the Committee as a "unique instrument" for promoting synergies and enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations system. The Secretary-General stated that

> "In many ways, ACC is the symbol of unity of purpose of the system; of the decentralized, diverse but

united system that our founders envisaged as the instrument to harness the specialized capacities and constituencies of the various agencies to meet the economic and social objectives of the Charter. But ACC can and should be more than a symbol. And I believe that we have only begun to exploit its full potential — its potential as an instrument of leadership for the Secretary-General in bringing to bear the wide-ranging capacities of the system on the overall effort to advance security and development; its potential as a collective source of advice to intergovernmental bodies and as an instrument for pursuing in a comprehensive way intergovernmental mandates; and its potential as a source of support for individual organizations within the system, in the face of challenges that are beyond the capacity of any one of them to address." (see E/1998/21, annex I)

10. A continuous and persistent process of improvement and change has characterized the work of ACC in recent years. ACC members have constantly pursued ideas and initiatives to strengthen system-wide activities and their impact, and to promote closer cooperation within the system in the pursuit of common goals of Member States. In the context of the reforms launched at the 1993 spring session of ACC, the Committee reaffirmed the individual and collective responsibility of the Secretary-General and the executive heads, as members of ACC, for providing impetus and effective direction to the work of the system within the policy guidance provided by the intergovernmental deliberative organs. The executive heads adopted a number of concrete steps to realize that vision, and stressed their resolve to revitalize ACC and its machinery (see ACC/1993/14). As part of the same effort, at the fall session of ACC in 1996, they adopted a joint statement on the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system. The statement elaborated further measures, in the context of the reform processes under way in the organizations of the system, towards a more effective, system-wide response to the changing international environment and the evolving needs of Member States.

11. A further review conducted by ACC at its fall session in 1998 pointed to a fundamental shift in attitudes and to a new culture of cooperation taking roots within the system that is opening doors for new and productive partnerships and new and more effective modalities of coordination. A number of steps taken by ACC in recent years underlie the renewed commitment of executive heads to strengthening the unity of purpose of the system and to ensuring that the Committee becomes the centrepiece of a more united and effective system. These include the use of consultative mechanisms involving groups of executive heads and task forces around major issues or objectives of common concern; ensuring better allocation of responsibilities on the basis of specific mandates and capacities; the renewed attention given to ensuring that the inter-agency machinery maximizes its contribution to the policy coordination role of the Economic and Social Council; commitment to more direct communication between and among executive heads and to more orderly and systematic sharing of information on new initiatives and on strategic planning; a more systematic use, for these purposes, of information technology; and a common concern to strengthen linkages with civil society. In order to further these objectives and measures, the Secretary-General established the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs, which includes staff seconded from ACC members, as part of the effort to strengthen "ownership" of ACC processes within the system. This Office provides dedicated substantive and technical support to ACC itself and its subsidiary bodies, and aims to facilitate the consultative processes and the systematic exchange of information that are so vital for a coherent and harmonious system.

12. The reform of ACC has been an integral part of the reforms under way in the United Nations system. A common feature of these reform processes has been a strong emphasis on broadening partnerships within the system, as well as with other international organizations and the wider civil society (see E/1999/48). Underlying this renewed emphasis on partnerships is the growing recognition, at both the secretariat and intergovernmental levels, that the challenges posed by the new international environment require integrated responses that are beyond the capacity of any one organization within the system. This emphasis on partnerships has enhanced opportunities for joint or collaborative actions, and has contributed to strengthening cooperative arrangements at the country level.

13. The strengthening of ACC's interactions with intergovernmental bodies, particularly the Economic and Social Council, has been greatly facilitated and encouraged by the transformations that have been taking place within the Council itself. In turn, the new spirit of motivation and growing culture of consultation and cooperation that is prevailing in ACC and the system as a whole should serve to support the renewal of the Council. These mutually reinforcing developments must be viewed as an integral part of a renewed determination system-wide to develop concerted, effective responses to the new challenges that confront the international community. For instance, while the Council is developing new approaches to its coordination function which build more systematically on the capacities and inputs of the agencies, both individually and

collectively, ACC executive heads are renewing their efforts to engage their governing bodies more systematically on system-wide issues and concerns.

14. The new approaches developed by the Council have helped create a new environment of mutual confidence. Particularly significant in this regard is the intensification of the dialogue between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions. This dialogue, carried out through high-level meetings including ministerial level participation, has addressed a range of major issues of key concern to the system and the international community as a whole. In the dialogue between the World Bank and the Council, the focus has been on the functioning of international financial markets and stability in financing for development, and on strengthening mutual cooperation, including, in that context, the relationship between the United Nations Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF) and the comprehensive development framework. More generally, the Council's new working methods have facilitated more business-like and action-oriented discussions on issues of key concern for the international community, and have made it possible for the system to contribute its knowledge, share information and seek overall policy guidance. The revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, and the Council's renewed dialogue with the organizations of the United Nations system are contributing to a new environment that provides for improved coordination at several levels — within the system, at both the inter-agency and intergovernmental levels, as well as among and within Member States themselves. An excellent example relates to the issue of poverty eradication — an overarching theme of the United Nations conferences of the 1990s — which has been the subject of a concerted effort within the ACC machinery to develop a system-wide action programme, and has been a main focus of the 1999 session of the Economic and Social Council, contributing to a renewal of political and institutional attention to the issue at all levels. The Council's initiative relating to Haiti is a practical demonstration not only of ways in which the principal organs of the United Nations can cooperate in advancing peace, security and development but also of the role that inter-agency cooperation for development can play in support of peace-building.

15. Guided by a strong awareness of the linkages between peace, security and development — and of the key role of development in peace-building, recently elaborated by the Secretary-General in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318) — ACC hopes that its efforts towards stronger system-wide cooperation will make an increasingly useful contribution to the work of the central intergovernmental bodies, and to enhanced interactions of mutual support among them, as well as between the central intergovernmental machinery and the governing bodies of the specialized agencies.

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16. Recent reforms have gone a long way towards achieving greater policy coherence and functional complementarity within the system, strengthening the system's collective capacity for strategic planning, and enhancing the system's flexibility and capacity for forward planning and rapid response to crisis situations.

17. The advances already achieved notwithstanding, the executive heads remain committed to seeking further improvements that could serve to enhance relevance and effectiveness in the activities, structures and methods of work of the ACC machinery, and in the overall management of the United Nations system. ACC members are fully aware that, as the international environment evolves and presents the United Nations system with new challenges, there is need for innovation and change, and for new initiatives that will enable the system to fully exploit its potential and maximize its effectiveness in responding to these challenges. With this objective in mind, ACC decided to undertake during 1999 a comprehensive assessment of the demands placed on the national and international systems by the new global environment that is emerging at the end of the twentieth century. At its 1999 spring session and at the "retreat" that followed, ACC members worked towards arriving at a shared definition of the main challenges ahead for the system, focusing on key common objectives around which Member States could be engaged on a priority basis, and on new or strengthened partnerships within the United Nations family to respond to these challenges. This process of reflection and discussion will continue at the 1999 fall session, which will endeavour to address the institutional and programmatic capacity of the system to respond flexibly and effectively to the challenges of the next century. In further reviewing the functioning of ACC in the light of proposals presented to the Committee, ACC will be guided by the conclusions of this process and by the objective of enhancing its capacity to be a key agent in the process of renewal under way in the system.

18. Against this background, ACC members consider the JIU report timely and helpful in their own efforts to further the transformation of ACC and its machinery.

III. Comments on the recommendations related to ACC and its functioning[1]

A. Measures related to ACC and its functioning

1. Recommendations related to ACC

Recommendation A 1.1

Executive heads are encouraged to continue to abide by the guiding principles which have set conditions for improving the effectiveness and impact of ACC by reinforcing their unity of purpose. Within the framework of these guiding principles and in order to further enhance the coherence of United Nations system-wide plans and activities, executive heads should reinforce the leadership role of the Secretary-General as Chairman of ACC, and the lead role of other executive heads and their respective organizations as lead agencies in their specific mandates and competencies.

19. ACC fully agrees with the thrust of this recommendation and its underlying objective of strengthening "ownership" of ACC processes among the organizations of the system. In the context of its ongoing reform and revitalization, ACC has set in place concrete steps to strengthen unity of purpose and coherence of actions among its members, based on a reaffirmation of the leadership role of the Secretary-General. These steps include a renewed commitment to inter-agency consultations and cooperation in launching new initiatives; a participatory process of consultations and exchange of information among its members for, *inter alia*, preparing the ACC agendas and discussions; and the increased use of lead agency/task force arrangements.

20. The new culture of consultations and cooperation that is taking root within the system, the emphasis on partnerships in the reform processes of most of the agencies, and the renewed sense of ownership within ACC are greatly enhancing the opportunities for joint action throughout the system and are leading to a growing number of collaborative initiatives. In particular, ACC has been encouraging and supporting cooperative arrangements that utilize flexible and pragmatic approaches that are needs-driven, time-bound and bring together groups of concerned agencies around specific activities on the basis of their comparative strengths. These approaches guided the ad hoc inter-agency task forces established by ACC for the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the major international conferences and summits. Examples of joint undertakings involving lead-agency or task-manager arrangements are multiplying within the system. They range from the initiative to roll back malaria to that for combating fires in Indonesia.

Recommendation A 1.2

ACC should continue to demonstrate the relevance and impact of its work by:

(a) Addressing issues which lend themselves to system-wide scrutiny;

(b) Developing policy-oriented and forward-looking agendas which contribute to strengthen the system's capacity for forward planning the strategic thinking and its ability to respond rapidly and adequately to major international developments;

(c) Ensuring that, where appropriate, the outcomes of its meetings and those of its subsidiary bodies are more action-oriented and underline activities for which secretariats themselves are accountable for implementation, and other issues requiring guidance or action from governing bodies.

21. The Secretary-General and organizations of the United Nations system share the view of JIU that ACC offers a unique forum for advancing intersecretariat cooperation and coordination in the United Nations system.

22. The process of agenda-setting for ACC involves extensive inter-agency consultations, and aims to further a longer-term system-wide perspective on interrelated issues facing the international community. The current agenda of ACC, for example, has, as noted above, a common theme running through the spring and fall sessions of 1999 and reaching to the first regular session of 2000, focusing on the challenges facing the system as it enters a new millennium and the response capacity of the system. The aim of the process is to ensure that necessary degree of continuity in ACC's work, and to see to it that discussions and decisions build on each other and that there is consistent monitoring of their follow-up. Taking a longer-term view does not preclude launching specific initiatives and reaching action-oriented conclusions. On the contrary, ACC members are determined to ensure that the outcome of each of the ACC sessions responds to current concerns and has an impact on the work of their respective organizations, including their intergovernmental bodies, as well as exerting genuine and measurable influence on public debate.

23. ACC members recognize that the value of ACC's work ultimately depends on the impact it has on bringing about more concerted and effective action programmes in support of international cooperation and development. At the same

time, the extent to which the work of ACC is action-oriented should be assessed over time and in relation to the overall work of the ACC machinery under ACC's direction. The assessment should extend beyond the ACC machinery, since an important measure of the usefulness of ACC deliberations is the impact they have on policy and programme development in the organizations themselves, and on ensuring that their decision-making and action programmes benefit from system-wide perspectives and inputs. There is also the more intangible (but also very real if not yet fully exploited in its potential) consideration of the impact that ACC statements and conclusions, emanating jointly from executive heads, can have on the international consensus-building and on promoting responses by the international community to challenges - and often crises - requiring urgent attention and action.

24. The opportunity that ACC offers for the executive heads of the system to get together twice a year to reflect on strategic directions and challenges facing the system as a whole also has clear worth in itself. While such discussions may not, per se, always yield specific action, they are regarded by ACC members as being of great value in that they afford them the opportunity to exchange views directly on each organization's perspective on major issues, thus contributing to enhanced cohesion and harmony within the entire United Nations system. With the executive heads focusing on setting overall directions, it is left to the subsidiary machinery to translate them into action-oriented decisions and work programmes. The subsidiary machinery has indeed been doing so successfully. Examples range from the work of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) to operationalize the "strategic framework" concept and the ACC statement of poverty to the work of the ACC machinery in the context of United Nations staff security and safety.

Recommendation A 1.3

Executive heads should pursue more actively their consideration of a new name for ACC which would better reflect the changes in its scope and functions, and submit in due course a proposal to the Economic and Social Council in that respect.

25. On various occasions, ACC has considered the advisability of a new name for itself that would reflect the changes that have taken place over the years in its functioning, in particular in regard to the range of issues that it addresses. When this issue was again raised in 1998 in the Committee, some organizations supported a change in the name of the Committee that would better convey its role, while others felt that a name change would be merely cosmetic. This is an issue that may well be reconsidered by the Committee in its further review of its own role and functioning.

2. Recommendations related to ACC machinery

Recommendation A 2.1

Implementation of the new working methods approved by ACC should entail that:

(a) Interaction among the four standing committees should be continuous and wide-ranging so that their various outputs can be used optimally by ACC;

(b) OC should continue to take a comprehensive look at all issues before ACC meetings in order to gain an overall perspective, while avoiding infringement on the authority delegated to the standing committees. In that respect, OC should not debate substantive matters falling within the competence of standing committees reporting directly to ACC;

(c) The empowerment of OC, CCPOQ, and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) through delegation of authority should result in their names being reviewed to put less emphasis on their organizational or consultative functions.

26. Consultations among the subsidiary bodies of ACC to address issues of common concern that cut across their respective mandates have become increasingly close and frequent over the past few years. Giving renewed attention to interactions among the ACC subsidiary bodies has been one of the principal features of the ongoing reform of ACC. Chairpersons of the subsidiary bodies consult regularly and contribute to each other's work. For instance, the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) has taken part in meetings of CCPOQ to work out a coordinated approach to the issues of poverty eradication, the UNDAF process and gender-sensitive indicators. In addition, a joint Inter-Agency Committee for Sustainable Development (IACSD)/CCPOQ/IACWGE task force is considering the expansion of the task manager system established by IACSD to other areas of collaboration and coordination within the United Nations system, including the thematic outcomes of global conferences other than the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The newly created Office for Inter-Agency Affairs is giving special attention to promoting closer interaction among the secretariats of the subsidiary machinery with a view to improving synergies and enhancing overall efficiency and coherence. To this end, it

is arranging for periodic consultations among the jointly financed secretariats and the secretaries of other subsidiary bodies of ACC.

27. The main task of OC is to facilitate the work of ACC, and to assist it in prioritizing its agenda and identifying and defining strategic and/or policy questions requiring attention at the level of executive heads. In so doing, it is understood that OC should not duplicate substantive discussions held by ACC standing committees. It should not, however, work in isolation from them either. It should draw on and bring together in an integrated manner the contributions of ACC subsidiary bodies and encourage effective interaction among them. Different standing committees may address similar issues with different perspectives, and it is for OC to synthesize their work for the consideration and action by ACC. In addition to clarifying issues and elaborating recommendations for action by ACC, OC, on the authority of ACC, disposes of matters on its behalf. OC is keeping its own role and functioning under constant review in order to provide the best possible support for the work of ACC.

28. ACC has taken note of the JIU recommendation to change the names of OC, CCPOQ and CCAQ to better reflect their functions and delegation of authority, and will keep the matter under consideration.

Recommendation A 2.2

Streamlining and flexibility of coordination mechanisms should remain the targets of periodic reviews of the structure of ACC machinery. ACC should therefore request OC and the standing committees to:

(a) Propose ways and means for avoiding the duplication of staff training mechanisms by using the United Nations Staff College as a system-wide institution, with the involvement of participating organizations in setting its work programme through the appropriate ACC subsidiary bodies;

(b) Pursue the review of ACC/Subcommittee on Nutrition in order to ensure that all organizations concerned with its activities are in a position to lend their full support to its programmes and related funding arrangements;

(c) Examine the need to have the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) become part of the ACC machinery, as the linkages between peace-building, humanitarian assistance and development become increasingly apparent.

29. Streamlining and enhancing flexibility are a central part of ACC guidelines for the functioning of its machinery. ACC appreciates the JIU recommendation to pursue this effort in the context of periodic reviews of the structure and functioning of ACC. ACC also shares the JIU's view concerning the need to avoid duplication of staff training mechanisms, and the role that the United Nations Staff College as a system-wide training institution could play in this context. Different options are currently under consideration to ensure the involvement of participating organizations in setting the work programme of the College, and to ensure that the inputs of the concerned ACC subsidiary bodies, including OC, CCPOQ and CCAQ, are consistent and mutually reinforcing.

30. The JIU recommendation to pursue the review of the Subcommittee on Nutrition in order to ensure that all concerned organizations are in a position to lend their full support to its activities and funding arrangements is also shared by ACC. Since the Subcommittee is a subsidiary body of CCPOQ, this issue is being addressed in the first instance by that Committee.

31. Underlying the JIU recommendation to examine the need to have IASC become part of the ACC machinery is the recognition of the inherent linkages between peace-building, humanitarian assistance and development. ACC is fully aware of these linkages. It should, at the same time, be recalled that the responsibilities and membership of the ACC machinery and those of IASC (not all ACC members participate in its work, and its membership includes civil society actors and one intergovernmental body) are quite different in nature and scope. IASC is one of a number of coordination mechanisms which, although not an integral part of the ACC machinery, contribute to the pursuit of ACC objectives of improved coherence in inter-agency responses. Steps will be taken to ensure that appropriate information on the work of IASC is made more systematically available to ACC so that any arrangements that need to be made committing the system as a whole can be pursued in the relevant ACC body.

Recommendation A 2.3

Secretariat support for ACC should be of concern to all its members. To enhance the contribution made by the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs, lead organizations and task managers should be encouraged by OC to become part of a wider "virtual secretariat" called upon more frequently to prepare background papers and draft reports.

32. Members of ACC consider effective and dedicated secretariat support essential to the work of ACC. Thus, they have welcomed the establishment of the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs to provide both substantive and technical

secretariat support to ACC on a full time basis. This support has been demonstrated in the secondment of staff to the Office from various organizations of the United Nations system, which at present include the United Nations Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Other agencies have also offered support for specific assignments or on an "as needed" basis.

33. As noted above, the use of lead agency arrangements to deal with needs-driven, time-bound tasks that cut across the mandates of different organizations is becoming increasingly prevalent within the system. The JIU recommendation that OC encourage lead organizations and task managers to become part of a wider virtual secretariat for ACC is, increasingly, an integral part of ACC's modus operandi. Lead agencies actively contribute to the preparation of background papers and draft reports for the consideration of ACC and its subsidiary machinery.

B. Measures to enhance ACC management of information

Recommendation B 1

The Secretary-General, as Chairman of ACC, should submit to the Economic and Social Council, as part of the annual overview report of ACC for 1999, indications on efforts made by executive heads towards a system-wide coordinated management of information, outlining, *inter alia*, the status of implementation of recommendations made by the Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC) and the scope, content, estimated financial implications and expected benefits of the proposed ACC information network.

34. The establishment of an ACC information network, including an ACC Web site and links to the Web sites of ACC member organizations, is an important part of ACC's strategy to enhance the exchange of information among its member organizations, facilitate continuous inter-agency consultations on issues of common concern and improve access to information on the work of ACC.

35. The new ACC Web site (acc.unsystem.org) builds on relevant ongoing work by its subsidiary bodies and individual organizations, and draws on existing capabilities in the system. The Web sites of CCAQ, CCPOQ and ISCC were designed to be compatible, and the newly set up ACC/OC Web site was developed taking full advantage of this already existing framework. Web sites of other subsidiary bodies will eventually be linked to this site.

36. As is mentioned in the ACC annual overview report (E/1999/48), ACC members consider that continuous flows and exchanges of information at both the executive head and working levels are crucial so that organizations are able to gain from and build on each others' work and experience. ACC has thus directed that a renewed effort be made to systematically exchange information at the executive level on new policy directions, as well as on strategic plans and new programme priorities being adopted by the various organizations. This is the core objective of the Executive Information Network, which is to become part of the overall ACC information network.

37. ACC reporting on its own functioning in the context of its annual reports will continue to address improvements in the information support for ACC and related modalities for information exchange among secretariats. Coordination of information systems development and in the management of information in the various agencies, as well as access by the intergovernmental machinery and Member States to relevant information available within the system, are related but distinct issues, and ACC would be pleased to arrange for a report to the Economic and Social Council on the subject, should the Council so wish.

Recommendation B 2

ACC should promote further efforts by all organizations to:

(a) Indicate on their Web sites, under pertinent thematic activities, their contribution to the improvement of system-wide coordination either through ACC or other cooperative arrangements. Similarly, Web sites on ACC and its subsidiary bodies, to be monitored under the aegis of OC, should focus on major activities being carried out and the results achieved;

(b) Apply to information made available online existing language policies for document distribution, unless otherwise directed by their governing bodies after consideration of related financial implications.

38. Members of ACC recognize the importance of establishing hyper-links to interconnect their Web sites, particularly on thematic issues that are of system-wide importance and of common interest. Many organizations are in fact already doing so in the context of their individual information systems development, while implementing

coordinated system-wide approaches. ACC members agree that the ACC Web site and those of its subsidiary bodies should focus on the major activities of the system and the results achieved.

39. While the intent of the JIU recommendation on the application of language policies for document distribution to information made available on-line is generally supported, this is a matter for each member organization to decide. Some organizations of the system make their information available on-line in more than one official language. Others use only one official language but have indicated their intention to post information on-line in more than one language. The decision on the number of official languages to use for information made available on-line is heavily influenced by the availability of resources.

C. Interaction between ACC and the intergovernmental bodies

Recommendation C 1

The General Assembly may wish to call on Member States to complement secretariats' inter-agency coordination efforts by better concerting and coordinating their own positions in the governing bodies of the different organizations within the system, and by exercising a more effective policy coordination at the national level within their Governments.

40. ACC members appreciate the intent of this recommendation, which is addressed to the General Assembly and Member States. The recommendation underlines the important point that coordination is greatly facilitated when government representatives take convergent positions on related issues in different fora. ACC members have, on numerous occasions, noted that the system's policy coherence would be significantly enhanced through more effective policy coordination at the national level within the Governments concerned. However, this is an area for action by the Governments of the Member States themselves.

Recommendation C 2

Legislative bodies which have not done so yet may wish to request the executive head to submit, under a specific agenda item on system-wide coordination, a periodic report focusing on decisions and recommendations by central coordinating bodies or by other governing bodies, which have implications for the organization's programme and budget, and measures taken or envisaged to ensure appropriate coordination and reinforce the unity of purpose of the system as a whole.

41. Keeping governing bodies aware of the wide range of initiatives being pursued within the United Nations system is a challenge faced by all organizations. The inclusion of a specific item on the agenda of the agencies' legislative or governing bodies which addresses United Nations system coordination was, in the past, the practice in many organizations. However, such practice led, on occasion, to duplication in debates and/or fragmented consideration of substantive issues. Thus, in some cases that practice has been discontinued and pertinent decisions and recommendations of central intergovernmental and intersecretariat bodies are integrated into documents addressing the substantive items concerned which allows for a more comprehensive, substantive treatment of the system-wide implications of the issues under consideration.

42. Resolutions adopted by central coordinating bodies or other intergovernmental bodies may result in requests for activities that were not programmed or budgeted by the governing bodies of the organizations concerned. Rather than dealing with the resulting financial implications on an *ex post facto* basis, as suggested in recommendation C 2, some organizations have long advocated that they be addressed prior to the adoption of the relevant resolutions. Providing organizations the opportunity to indicate whether they could absorb the costs of the activities being requested within current and/or successive programmes of work and budget, or whether such activities could only be carried out if additional financing was provided, would avoid the risk of diversion of resources or staff time from the programme of work and budget approved by its governing bodies, while contributing to more consistent and coherent governance by Member States. The growing number of reporting requests also adds to the costs of coordination, and ways to streamline such requests need to be given renewed attention.

Recommendation C 3

Legislative bodies may wish to request from executive heads a more complete and transparent submission of financial implications related to the inter-agency coordination process, along with cost-saving or efficiency measures taken.

43. ACC fully shares the intent of enhancing efficiency and transparency underlying this recommendation. It should be noted, at the same time, that coordination, if properly approached, should be pursued not as a separate function but rather as an integral part of the overall management of relevant programmes and the provision of substantive support to intergovernmental processes. As such, isolating

coordination costs is often rather difficult and may prove misleading. This applies even to costs directly related to the work of the ACC machinery, such as travel connected with meetings of inter-agency bodies. These meetings are often scheduled in connection with intergovernmental meetings attended by agency representatives, and travel for inter-agency meetings is often combined with other business connected with substantive programme activities in the areas covered by the officials involved.

44. ACC members fully support the objective of obtaining cost-saving and maximizing efficiency in inter-agency coordination. Many measures in this regard have been and continue to be taken. In particular, the length and frequency of meetings of ACC subsidiary bodies have been reduced substantially over the years, as have inter-agency communication costs.

Recommendation C 4

The General Assembly may wish to reaffirm, as a matter of principle, its own role in approving, on behalf of the system, the total budgets of all jointly financed secretariats, which should be submitted through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) along with either the related cost-sharing formulas or expected contributions from participating organizations.

45. The Secretary-General supports the thrust of this recommendation, aimed at strengthening the legislative basis of the budgetary process with respect to jointly financed activities. The reference to the "total budgets of all jointly financed secretariats" requires clarification, however. The recommendation, as drafted, implies extension to the Subcommittee on Nutrition of the financial arrangements which are currently in force with regard to the budgets of CCAQ, CCPOQ, ISCC and interorganizational security measures. The Subcommittee on Nutrition, unlike others, is financed through voluntary arrangements. The proposed extension could thus have financial implications for the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system.

46. In this connection, it should also be noted that the treatment, in the JIU report, of relevant financial arrangements in the United Nations budget is limited to those established under section 29 of the United Nations programme budget for 1998-1999 (jointly financed activities). The JIU report thus does not cover arrangements established under section 30 of the budget relating to the financing of the interorganizational security measures activities, which are also jointly financed activities.

47. In addition, it should be noted that the data on the shared 1996-1997 costs of participating organizations in financing the activities of CCAQ, CCPOQ and ISCC contained in table 2 of the JIU report (see A/54/288) is based on provisional data. After closing the 1996-1997 accounts for the final expenditures under those activities, the revised amounts are as follows:[a]

	Total actual expenditures	*United Nations share*
	(thousands of United States dollars)	
CCAQ	1 750.7	502.8
CCPOQ	953.9	191.3
ISCC	1 226.0	336.0

[a] See A/54/6, sect. 29.

Notes

[1] Recommendations in italics are reproduced from A/54/288, executive summary.